

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KUALA 08858 01 OF 02 140833Z  
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 VO-05 INSE-00  
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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7705  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
USMISSION GENEVA  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY MANILA  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 8858

E.O.11652: GDS  
TAGS: SREF  
SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE BOAT REFUGEE TRENDS --MALAYSIA

REF: BANGKOK 22489

1. SUMMARY: ARRIVALS HAVE CONTINUED THROUGH JULY AT RATE EXCEEDING ALL PREVIOUS LEVELS DESPITE STORMS, PIRACY, AND INCREASED LOCALIZED GOM RESISTANCE TO LANDINGS. PULAU TENGAH, JOHORE, CAMP POPULATION HAS DOUBLED AND TRENGGANU STATE HAS OPENED NEW CAMP ON ISLAND 12 MILES OFFSHORE. ALTHOUGH WE EXPECT ASYLUM GENERALLY TO CONTINUE TO BE GRANTED, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT GOM IS INSTITUTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO LIMIT ARRIVALS IN MALAYSIA AS BACKLASH TO IMBALANCE IN ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE RATIO OF PAST MONTHS. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MONTH OF JULY, GOM GRANTED TEMPORARY ASYLUM TO 4,092 INDOCHINESE. TO DATE, IN AUGUST, AN ADDITIONAL 600 ADMISSIONS HAVE  
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PAGE 02 KUALA 08858 01 OF 02 140833Z

BEEN REPORTED BY UNHCR, BRINGING AVERAGE FOR ARRIVALS PAST 900 PER WEEK LEVEL FOR LAST FIVE WEEKS. AS IN JUNE AND JULY, REPORTED ARRIVALS FOR AUGUST ARE DOWN CONSIDERABLY IN FIRST TEN DAYS OF MONTH. IF JUNE AND JULY PATTERN TO BE REPEATED, HOWEVER, ARRIVALS WILL SHOOT UP DRAMATICALLY FROM AUGUST 10 OR 11 TO END OF MONTH.

3. REFUGEES INCREASINGLY REPORT STORMY WEATHER, NARROW ESCAPES

FROM FOUNDERING AFTER VENTURING INTO MONSOONAL SOUTH CHINA SEA IN POORLY OUTFITTED VESSELS ARE OFTEN RELATED BY REFUGEES. PIRACY CONTINUES UNABATED BUT ACCOUNTS OF EXTREME CRUELTY AND VIOLENCE ACCOMPANYING ROBBERIES ARE FEWER. ON THE OTHER HAND, REPORTS OF SHIPS PASSING REFUGEES BY OR RENDERING ONLY MEANEST RELIEF ARE ON THE RISE. OIL DRILLING PLATFORMS OFF THAI AND MALAYSIAN COASTS CONTINUE TO SET PACE FOR EFFECTIVE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. DESPITE THEIR RISE IN POPULARITY AS PLACES OF TEMPORARY RESPIE, AS REPAIR STATIONS, OR AS REPROVISIONING POINTS, LARGELY NORTH AMERICAN-STAFFED RIGS ARE GENEROUS TO BOAT REFUGEES. DOCUMENTED ACCOUNTS OF THEIR KINDNESS ARE MANY.

4. GOM ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACCEPTING REFUGEES VARY FROM STATE TO STATE. VAST BULK OF ARRIVALS PAST FIVE WEEKS HAVE BEEN ADMITTED TO PULAU TENGAH, ISLAND, JOHORE, WHICH NOW SHELTERS MORE THAN 6,000 REFUGEES. CAMP'S POPULATION HAS DOUBLED IN A SINGLE MONTH. THOUGH STRAINED, UNHCR-RED CRESCENT LOGISTICAL SYSTEM APPARENTLY ADEQUATE TO NOURISH REFUGEES, AND WATER SHOULD NOT BE A PROBLEM WITH ONSET OF MONSOON. SHELTER IS PERENNIAL WORRY AND AT RATE UNHCR IS FACILITATING CONSTRUCTION BY PROVISION OF MATERIALS, PULAU TENGAH REFUGEES FACE, AT BEST, EXTREME DISCOMFORTS DURING RAINY SEASON

5. AS REGARDS ACCEPTANCE ATTITUDES IN TRENGGANU STATE, SITE OF PULAU BESAR CAMP (5,500 REFUGEES) A TREND TOWARD REJECTING BOATS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 KUALA 08858 01 OF 02 140833Z

EVEN TO THE EXTENT OF TOWING THEM OUT TO SEA, IS RECOGNIZED. ACTIONS SEEMINGLY COORDINATED, THOUGH, AND REFUGEES WERE OFTEN TAKEN ABOARD NAVAL VESSELS AFTER HAVING BEEN TOWED FOR SOME DISTANCE. IN SUCH CASES, REFUGEE VESSELS WERE THEN SUNK BY NAVAL GUNFIRE AND REFUGEES DEPOSITED SAFETY ON PULAU TENGAH, FAR TO SOUTH, IN JOHORE. SINKING OF REFUGEE VESSELS IN THIS MANNER APPARENTLY MALAYSIAN PRECAUTION AGAINST REFUGEE DEPOSITING PASSENGERS IN MALAYSIA AND THEN RETURNING TO VIETNAM FOR SECOND LEVY OF ESCAPEES. AUSTRALIANS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED WITH PROCEDURE SINCE SINKING MAKE FOR ALL THE FEWER VESSELS WITH POTENTIAL FOR MAKING IT TO DARWAIN.

6. OTHER TRENDS ARE NOTED IN TRENGGANU. NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES ALMOST ALWAYS QUESTIONED AS TO THEIR ETHNICITY. ETHNIC VIETNAMESE HAVE BETTER CHANCE OF ADMISSION THAN ETHNIC CHINESE, WHO, INCIDENTALLY, COMPRISE SIXTY-FOUR PERCENT OF PAST FIVE WEEKS' ARRIVALS. TRENGGANU POLICE OFTEN FIRE IN AIR AND INTO WATER AND AROUND BOATS TO DISCOURAGE SCUTTLE CLOSE TO BEACH. KELANTAN STATE TO NORTH (KOTA BAHARU) AND PAHANG STATE (KUANTAN), TO SOUTH OF TRENGGANU, ALSO OFTEN REJECT REFUGEES. PULAU TENGAH ISLAND (PARA 4) EIGHT MILES OFFSHORE JOHORE STATE, SEEMS

ONLY EASY ACCESS ASYLUM LEFT ON EAST COAST FOR TIME BEING. REFUGEES  
REJECTED ELSEWHERE GENERALLY MAKE THEIR WAY TO PULAU TENGAH.

7. TOUGHENING ATTITUDE OF TRENGGANU, AND OF OTHER EAST COAST  
STATE, FUTHER DEMONSTRATED BY DECISION TO MOVE LARGE NUMBERS  
OF REFUGEES FROM PULAU BESAR CAMP TO ISLAND 12 MILES OFFSHORE.  
ON JULY 30, TRENGGANU STATE SECURITY COUNCIL NOTIFIED UNHCR EAST COAS  
T  
REF THAT 1,200 PEOPLE, JULY ARRIVALS, WERE TO BE MOVED SUMMARILY TO  
PULAU BEDONG ISLAND. UNHCR REP'S PROTESTS THAT THERE EXISTED NO  
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT REFUGEES ON ISLAND WENT UNHEEDED. FIVE  
HUNDRED PEOPLE, FIRST TRANCHE, WERE DEPOSITIED ON ISLAND FOLLOWING  
DAY, JULY 31.

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PAGE 04 KUALA 08858 01 OF 02 140833Z

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PAGE 01 KUALA 08858 02 OF 02 140835Z  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 8858

8. A LARGE TENT HAS SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN ERECTED TOSHELTER REFUGEES  
AND BUILDING MATERIALS ARE TRICKLING ONTO PULAU BEDONG. SCHEME OF  
GOM AUTHORITIES IS THAT REFUGEES IN TENT BUILD SHELTERS THEREBY

MAKING ROOM IN "TRANSIENT CENTER" FOR SUCCEEDING WAVES OF ARRIVALS. UNHCR HAS SUCCEEDED IN FORESTALLING FURTHER MASS MOVEMENTS OF REFUGEES TO PULAU BEDONG UNTIL WELLS CAN BE DUG FOR DRINKING WATER. EMBOFFS VISITING ISLAND, HOWEVER, REPORT WATER FROM SOLE EXISTING DEEP WELL IS HARDLY POTABLE. OFFICERS FURTHER REPORT INFESTATION OF MOSQUITOS AND ABUNDANCE OF SNAKES ON SCRUB AND PALM COVERED HIGH ISLAND. UNHCR HAS BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN GETTING PERMISSION TO CUT TREES OR TO CLEAR BRUSH IN ORDER TO LAY OUT ORDERLY CAMP. CONSTRUCTION OF HUTS AND LEAN-TOS BY REFUGEES PROCEEDING PIECEMEAL AND IN HAPHAZARD FASHION. GENERAL SITUATION ON ISLAND DESCRIBED BY ONE UNHCR OFFICER TO BE "CHAOTIC".

9. ADDED TO FOREGOING INDICATIONS OF WANING SYMPATHY AND WAXING FRUSTRATION OF EAST COAST AUTHORITIES IS GOM DECISION TO PROSCRIBE, INDEFINITELY, JOURNALISTS FROM MALAYSIAN REFUGEE CAMPS. NATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 KUALA 08858 02 OF 02 140835Z

SECURITY COUNCIL EXPECTED TO OFFICIALLY INFORM EMBASSIES AND HIGH COMMISSIONS IN KUALA LUMPUR OF POLICY IN A DAY OR TWO.

10. THERE ARE THUS INDICATIONS THAT THE MALAYSIANS ARE BEGINNING TO TAKE CONCERTED MEASURES TO LIMIT AS BEST THEY CAN FUTURE, LARGE-SCALE, ARRIVALS OF VIETNAMESE BOAT REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA. NOTING, PERHAPS, DISPARITY OF REFUGEE ARRIVAL RATES BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND REST OF REGION, AUTHORITIES ALMOST CERTAINLY ENDEAVORING TO DIMINISH COUNTRY'S POPULARITY AS PLACE OF TEMPORARY ASYLUM. IN-CAMP CONDITIONS FOR REFUGEES MAY WORSEN AS A RESULT. SOME BOATS MAY FOUNDER DURING ONCOMING MONSOON AS THEY SEEK ASYLUM FROM ONE POINT TO ANOTHER ALONG COAST OF MALAYSIA. INCREASING NUMBERS OF REFUGEES MAY BE FORCED TO SCUTTLE THEIR CRAFT UPON APPROACHING SHORE. OTHER, STURDIER, CRAFT MAY WELL BE REPROVISIONED AND ORDERED ON WHERE BEFORE THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO LAND.

11. DESPITE HARDSHIPS AND GROWING RISKS FOR REFUGEES, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT LARGE VOLUME OF NEW BOAT REFUGEE ARRIVALS WILL CONTINUE TO FIND ASYLUM, SOMEWHERE, IN MALAYSIA FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE. BUT THE RATE OF 900 PLUS ARRIVALS PER WEEK VERSUS A RECENT AVERAGE OF ONLY 400 OR LESS DEPARTURES OBVIOUSLY DOES NOT REASSURE MALAYSIANS AND COULD LEAD TO PROGRESSIVELY MORE DRASTIC MEASURES TO CURB REFUGEE INTAKE.

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## Message Attributes

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**Subject:** INDOCHINESE BOAT REFUGEE TRENDS --MALAYSIA  
**TAGS:** SREF, VM, MY, XC, XD  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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